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THE WOMAN AND THE UNIVERSITY

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THE WOMAN AND THE UNIVERSITY

DAVID STARR JORDAN

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THE WOMAN AND THE UNIVERSITY

THE subject of the higher training of young women may resolve itself into three questions:

1. *Shall a girl receive a college education?*

2. *Shall she receive the same kind of college education as a boy?*

3. *Shall she be educated in the same college?*

As to the first question: It must depend on the character of the girl. Precisely so with the boy. What we should do with either depends on his or her possibilities. No parent should let either boy or girl enter life with any less preparation than the best he can give. It is true that many college graduates, boys and girls alike, do not amount to much after the schools have done all they can. It is true, also, that higher education is not a question alone of preparing great men for great things. It must prepare even little men for greater things than they would otherwise have found possible. And so it is with the education of women. The needs of the time are imperative. The highest product of social evolution is the growth of the civilized home, the home that only a wise, cultivated and high-minded woman can make. To furnish such women is one of the worthiest functions of higher education. No young women capable of becoming such should be condemned to anything lower. Even with

those who are in appearance too dull or too vacillating to reach any high ideal of wisdom, this may be said — it does no harm to try. A few hundred dollars is not much to spend on an experiment of such moment. Four of the best years of one's life spent in the company of noble thoughts and high ideals cannot fail to leave their impress. To be wise, and at the same time womanly, is to wield a tremendous influence, which may be felt for good in the lives of generations to come. It is not forms of government by which men are made and unmade. It is the character and influence of their mothers and their wives. The higher education of women means more for the future than all conceivable legislative reforms. And its influence does not stop with the home. It means higher standards of manhood, greater thoroughness of training, and the coming of better men. Therefore let us educate our girls as well as our boys. A generous education should be the birthright of every daughter of the Republic as well as of every son.

It is hardly necessary among intelligent men and women to argue that a good woman is a better one for having received a college education. Anything short of this is inadequate for the demands of modern life and modern culture. The college training should give some basis for critical judgment among the various lines of thought and effort which force themselves upon our attention. Untrained cleverness is said to be the most striking characteristic of the American woman. Trained cleverness, a very much more

charming thing, is characteristic of the American college woman. And when cleverness stands in the right perspective, when it is so strengthened and organized that it becomes wisdom, then it is the most valuable dowry a bride can bring to her home.

Even if the four K's, "Kirche, Kinder, Kuchen and Kleider," are to occupy woman's life, as Emperor William would have us believe, the college education is not too serious a preparation for the profession of directing them. A wise son is one who has had a wise mother, and to give alertness, intelligence and wisdom is the chief function of a college education.

2. Shall we give our Girls the Same Education as our Boys?

Yes, and no. If we mean by the *same,* an equal degree of breadth and thoroughness, an equal fitness for high thinking and wise acting, yes, let it be the same. If we mean this: Shall we reach this end by exactly the *same* course of studies? then the answer must be, No. For the same course of study will not yield the same results with different persons. The ordinary "college course" which has been handed down from generation to generation is purely conventional. It is a result of a series of compromises in trying to fit the traditional education of clergymen and gentlemen to the needs of a different social era. The old college course met the needs of nobody, and therefore was adapted to all alike. The great educational awakening of the last twenty years in America has lain in breaking the bonds of this old system. The essence

of the new education is constructive individualism. Its purpose is to give to each young man that training which will make a man of *him*. Not the training which a century or two ago helped to civilize the mass of boys of that time, but that which will civilize this particular boy. The main reason why the college students of today are twenty times as many as twenty years ago is that the college training now given is valuable to twenty times as many men as could be helped by the narrow courses of twenty years ago.

In the university of today the largest liberty of choice in study is given to the student. The professor advises, the student chooses, and the flexibility of the courses makes it possible for every form of talent to receive proper culture. Because the college of today helps ten times as many men as that of yesterday could hope to reach, it is ten times as valuable. This difference lies in the development of special lines of work and in the growth of the elective system. The power of choice carries the duty of choosing rightly. The ability to choose has made a man out of the college boy, and has transferred college work from an alternation of tasks and play to its proper relation to the business of life. Meanwhile the old ideals have not risen in value. If our colleges were to go back to the cut-straw of mediævalism, to their work of twenty years ago, their professors would speak to empty benches. In those colleges which still cling to these traditions the benches are empty today, or filled with idlers.

I do not mean to condemn the study of the ancient classics and mathematics which made almost the whole of the older college course. These studies must always have their place, but no longer an exclusive place. The study of the language and literature of Greece still ranks with the noblest efforts of the human intelligence. For those who can master it, Greek gives a help not to be obtained in any other way. As Thoreau once observed, those who would speak of forgetting the Greek are those who never knew it. But without mastery there is no gain of strength. To compel all men and boys of whatever character or ability to study Greek is in itself a degradation of Greek, as it is a hardship to those forced to spend their strength where it is not effective. There are other forms of culture better fitted to other types of man, and the essential feature lies in the strength of mastery.

The best education for a young woman is surely not that which has proved unfit for the young man. She is an individual as well as he, and her work gains as much as his by relating it to her life. But an institution which meets the varied needs of varied men can also meet the varied needs of varied women. The intellectual needs of the two classes are not very different in many important respects. In so far as these are different the elective system gives full play for the expression of such differences. It is true that most men in college look forward to professional training and that very few women do so. But the college training is not in itself a part of any profession, and it is broad

enough in its range of choice to point to men and women alike the way to any profession which may be chosen. Those who have to do with the higher education of women know that the severest demands can be met by them as well as by men. There is no demand for easy or "goody-goody" courses of study for women except as this demand has been encouraged by men. In this matter the supply has always preceded the demand.

There are, of course, certain average differences between men and women as students. Women have often greater sympathy or greater readiness of memory or apprehension, greater fondness for technique. In the languages and literature, often in mathematics and history, they are found to excel. They lack, on the whole, originality. They are not attracted by unsolved problems, and in the inductive or "inexact" sciences they seldom take the lead. The "motor" side of their minds and natures is not strongly developed. They do not work for results as much as for the pleasure of study. In the traditional courses of study — traditional for men — they are often very successful. Not that these courses have a fitness for women, but that women are more docile and less critical as to the purposes of education. And to all these statements there are many exceptions. In this, however, those who have taught both men and women must agree; the training of women is just as serious and just as important as the training of men, and no training is adequate which falls short of the best.

3. Shall Women be Taught in the Same Classes as Men?

This is partly a matter of taste or personal preference. It does no harm whatever to either men or women to meet those of the other sex in the same classrooms. But if they prefer not to do so, let them do otherwise. No harm is done in either case, nor has the matter more than secondary importance. Much has been said for and against the union in one institution of technical schools and schools of liberal arts. The technical quality is emphasized by its separation from general culture. But I believe that better men are made when the two are brought more closely together. The culture studies and their students gain from the feeling of reality and utility cultivated by technical work. The technical students gain from association with men and influences of which the aggregate tendency is toward greater breadth of sympathy and a higher point of view.

A woman's college is more or less distinctly a technical school. In most cases, its purpose is distinctly stated to be such. It is a school of training for the profession of womanhood. It encourages womanliness of thought as more or less different from the plain thinking which is called manly. The brightest work in woman's colleges is often accompanied by a nervous strain, as though its doer were fearful of falling short of some outside standard. The best work of men is natural, is unconscious, the normal result of the contact of the mind with the problem in question.

In this direction, I think, lies the strongest argument for co-education. This argument is especially cogent in institutions in which the individuality of the student is recognized and respected. In such schools each man, by his relation to action and realities, becomes a teacher of women in these regards, as, in other ways, each cultivated woman is a teacher of men.

In woman's education, as planned for women alone, the tendency is toward the study of beauty and order. Literature and language take precedence over science. Expression is valued more highly than action. In carrying this to an extreme the necessary relation of thought to action becomes obscured. The scholarship developed is not effective, because it is not related to success. The educated woman is likely to master technique, rather than art; method, rather than substance. She may know a good deal, but she can do nothing. Often her views of life must undergo painful changes before she can find her place in the world.

In schools for men alone, the reverse condition often obtains. The sense of reality obscures the elements of beauty and fitness. It is of great advantage to both men and women to meet on a plane of equality in education. Women are brought into contact with men who can do things — men in whom the sense of reality is strong, and who have definite views of life. This influence affects them for good. It turns them away from sentimentalism. It gives tone to their religious thoughts and impulses. Above all, it tends to encourage action as governed by ideals, as opposed

to that resting on caprice. It gives them better standards of what is possible and impossible when the responsibility for action is thrown upon them.

In like manner, the association with wise, sane and healthy women has its value for young men. This value has never been fully realized, even by the strongest advocates of co-education. It raises their ideal of womanhood, and the highest manhood must be associated with such an ideal. This fact shows itself in many ways; but to point out its existence must suffice for the present paper.

At the present time the demand for the higher education of women is met in three different ways:

1. In separate colleges for women, with courses of study more or less parallel with those given in colleges for men. In some of these the teachers are all women, in some mostly men, and in others a more or less equal division obtains. In nearly all these institutions, those old traditions of education and discipline are more prevalent than in colleges for men, and nearly all retain some trace of religious or denominational control. In all, the *Zeitgeist* is producing more or less commotion, and the changes in their evolution are running parallel with those in colleges for men.

2. In annexes for women to colleges for men. In these, part of the instruction to the men is repeated for the women, though in different classes or rooms, and there is more or less opportunity to use the same libraries and museums. In some other institutions, the

relations are closer, the privileges of study being similar, the difference being mainly in the rules of conduct by which the young women are hedged in, the young men making their own.

It seems to me that the annex system cannot be a permanent one. The annex student does not get the best of the institution, and the best is none too good for her. Sooner or later she will demand it, or go where the best is to be had. The best students will cease to go to the annex. The institution must then admit women on equal terms, or not admit them at all. There is certainly no educational reason why a woman should prefer the annex of one institution when another equally good throws its doors wide open to her.

3. The third system is that of co-education. In this system young men and young women are admitted to the same classes, subjected to the same requirements, and governed by the same rules. This system is now fully established in the State institutions of the North and West, and in most other colleges in the same region. Its effectiveness has long since passed beyond question among those familiar with its operation. Other things being equal, the young men are more earnest, better in manners and morals, and in all ways more civilized than under monastic conditions. The women do more work in a more natural way, with better perspective and with saner incentives than when isolated from the influence of the society of men. There is less of silliness and folly where a man is

not a novelty. In co-educational institutions of high standards, frivolous conduct or scandals of any form are rarely known. The responsibility for decorum is thrown from the school to the woman, and the woman rises to the responsibility. Many professors have entered Western colleges with strong prejudices against co-education. These prejudices have not often endured the test of experience with men who have made an honest effort to form just opinions.

It is not true that the character of the college work has been in any way lowered by co-education. The reverse is decidedly the case. It is true that untimely zeal of one sort or another has filled the West with a host of so-called colleges. It is true that most of these are weak and doing poor work in poor ways. It is true that most of these are co-educational. It is also true that the great majority of their students are not of college grade at all. In such schools low standards rule, both as to scholarship and as to manners. The student fresh from the country, with no preparatory training, will bring the manners of his home. These are not always good manners, as manners are judged. But none of these defects is derived from co-education; nor are any of these conditions made worse by it.

Very lately it is urged against co-education that its social demands cause too much strain both on young men and young women. College men and college women, being mutually attractive, there are developed too many receptions, dances and other

functions in which they enjoy each other's company. But this is a matter easily regulated. Furthermore, at the most the average young woman in college spends in social matters less than one-tenth the time she would spend at home. With the young man the whole matter represents the difference between high-class and low-class associates and associations. When college men stand in normal relation with college women, meeting them in society as well as in the classroom, there is distinctly less of drunkenness, rowdyism and vice than obtains under other conditions. And no harm comes to the young woman through the good influence she exerts. To meet freely the best young men she will ever know, the wisest, cleanest and strongest, can surely do no harm to a young woman. Nor will the association with the brightest and sanest young women of the land work any harm to the young men. This we must always recognize. The best young men and the best young women, all things considered, are in our colleges. And this has been and will always be the case.

It is true that co-education is often attempted under very adverse conditions. Conditions are adverse when the little girls of preparatory schools and schools of music are mingled with the college students and given the same freedom. This is wrong, whatever the kind of discipline offered, lax or strict; the two classes need a different sort of treatment.

When young women have no residence devoted to their use, and are forced to rent parlors and garrets

in private houses of an unsympathetic village, evil results sometimes arise. Not very often, to be sure, but still once in a while. These are not to be charged to co-education, but to the unfit conditions that make the pursuit of personal culture difficult or impossible. Women are more readily affected by surroundings than men are, and squalid, ill-regulated, Bohemian conditions should not be part of their higher education.

Another condition very common and very undesirable is that in which young women live at home and traverse a city twice each day on railway or street cars to meet their recitations in some college. The greatest instrument of culture in a college is the "college atmosphere," the personal influence exerted by its professors and students. The college atmosphere develops feebly in the rush of a great city. The "spur-studenten" or railway-track students, as the Germans call them, the students who live far from the university, get very little of this atmosphere. The young woman who attends the university under these conditions contributes nothing to the university atmosphere, and therefore receives very little from it. She may attend her recitations and pass her examinations, but she is in all essential respects "in absentia," and so far as the best influences of the university are concerned, she is neither "co-educated" nor "educated." The "spur-student" system is bad enough for young men, virtually wasting half their time. With young women the condition of continuous rail-

roading, attempted study on the trains, the necessary frowsiness of railway travel and the laxness of manners it cultivates, are all elements very undesirable in higher education. If young women enter the colleges, they should demand that suitable place be made for them. Failing to find this, they should look for it somewhere else. Associations which develop vulgarity cannot be used for the promotion of culture either for men or for women. That the influence of cultured women on the whole is opposed to vulgarity is a powerful argument for education, and is the secret basis of much of the agitation against it.

With all this it is necessary for us to recognize actual facts. There is no question that a reaction has set in against co-education. The number of those who proclaim their unquestioning faith is relatively fewer than would have been the case ten years ago. This change in sentiment is not universal. It will be nowhere revolutionary. Young women will not be excluded from any institution where they are now welcomed, nor will the almost universal rule of co-education in State institutions be in any way reversed. The reaction shows itself in a little less civility of boys toward their sisters and the sisters of other boys; in a little more hedging on the part of the professors; in a little less pointing with pride on the part of college executive officials. There is nothing tangible in all this. Its existence may be denied or referred to ignorance or prejudice.

But such as it is, we may for a moment inquire

into its causes. First as to those least worthy. Here we may place the dislike of the idle boy to have his failures witnessed by women who can do better. I have heard of such feelings, but I have no evidence that they play much actual part in the question at issue. Inferior women do better work than inferior men because they are more docile and have much less to distract their minds. But there exists a strong feeling among rowdyish young men that the preference of women interferes with rowdyish practices. This interference is resented by them, and this resentment shows itself in the use of the offensive term "co-ed" and of more offensive words in vogue in more rowdyish places. I have not often heard the term "co-ed" used by gentlemen, at least without quotation marks. Where it is prevalent, it is a sign that true co-education — that is, education in terms of generous and welcome equality — does not exist. I have rarely found opposition to co-education on the part of really serious students. The majority are strongly in favor of it, but the minority in this as in many other cases make the most noise. The rise of a student movement against co-education almost always accompanies a general recrudescence of academic vulgarity.

A little more worthy of respect as well as a little more potent is the influence of the athletic spirit. In athletic matters, the young women give very little assistance. They cannot play on the teams, they cannot yell, and they are rarely generous with their

money in helping those who can. A college of a thousand students, half women, counts for no more athletically than one of five hundred, all men. It is vainly imagined that colleges are ranked by their athletic prowess, and that every woman admitted keeps out a man, and this man a potential punter or sprinter. There is not much truth in all of this, and if there were, it is of no consequence. College athletics is in its essence by-play, most worthy and valuable for many reasons, but nevertheless only an adjunct to the real work of the college, which is education. If a phase of education otherwise desirable interferes with athletics, so much the worse for athletics.

Of like grade is the feeling that men count for more than women, because they are more likely to be heard from in after-life. Therefore, their education is of more importance, and the presence of women impedes it.

A certain adverse influence comes from the fact that the oldest and wealthiest of our institutions are for men alone or for women alone. These send out a body of alumni who know nothing of co-education, and who judge it with the positiveness of ignorance. Most men filled with the time-honored traditions of Harvard and Yale, of which the most permeating is that of Harvard's and Yale's infallibility, are against co-education on general principles. Similar influences in favor of the separate education of women go out from the sister institutions of the East. The methods

of the experimenting, irreverent, idol-breaking West find no favor in their eyes.

The only serious new argument against co-education is that derived from the fear of the adoption by universities of woman's standards of art and science rather than those of man, the fear that amateurism would take the place of specialization in our higher education. Women take up higher education because they enjoy it; men because their careers depend upon it. Only men, broadly speaking, are capable of objective studies. Only men can learn to face fact without flinching, unswayed by feeling or preference. The reality with woman is the way in which the fact affects her. Original investigation, creative art, the "resolute facing of the world as it is"— all belong to man's world, not at all to that of the average woman. That women in college do as good work as the men is beyond question. In the university they do not, for this difference exists, the rare exceptions only proving the rule, that women excel in technique, men in actual achievement. If instruction through investigation is the real work of the real university, then in the real university the work of the most gifted women may be only by-play.

It has been feared that the admission of women to the university would vitiate the masculinity of its standards, that neatness of technique would replace boldness of conception, and delicacy of taste replace soundness of results.

It is claimed that the preponderance of high-school-

educated women in ordinary society is showing some such effects in matters of current opinion. For example, it is claimed that the university extension course is no longer of university nature. It is a lyceum course designed to please women who enjoy a little poetry, play and music, who read the novels of the day, dabble in theosophy, Christian science, or physic psychology, who cultivate their astral bodies and think there is something in palmistry, and are edified by a candy-coated ethics of self-realization. There is nothing ruggedly true, nothing masculine left in it. Current literature and history are affected by the same influences. Women pay clever actors to teach them — not Shakespeare or Goethe, but how one ought to feel on reading King Lear or Faust or Saul. If the women of society do not read a book it will scarcely pay to publish it. Science is popularized in the same fashion by ceasing to be science and becoming mere sentiment or pleasing information. This is shown by the number of books on how to study a bird, a flower, a tree, or a star, through an opera-glass, and without knowing anything about it. Such studies may be good for the feelings or even for the moral nature, but they have no elements of that "fanaticism for veracity," which is the highest attribute of the educated man.

These results of the education of many women and a few men, by which the half-educated woman becomes a controlling social factor, have been lately set in strong light by Dr. Münsterberg. But they are

used by him, not as an argument against co-education, but for the purpose of urging the better education of more men. They form likewise an argument for the better education of more women. The remedy for feminine dilettantism is found in more severe training. Current literature as shown in profitable editions reflects the taste of the leisure class. The women with leisure who read and discuss vapid books are not representative of woman's higher education. Most of them have never been educated at all. In any event this gives no argument against co-education. It is thorough training, not separate training, which is indicated as the need of the times. Where this training is taken is a secondary matter, though I believe, with the fulness of certainty that better results can be obtained, mental, moral and physical in co-education, than in any monastic form of instruction.

A final question: Does not co-education lead to marriage? Most certainly it does; and this fact cannot be and need not be denied. The wonder is rather that there are not more of such marriages. It is a constant surprise that so many college men turn from their college associates and marry some earlier or later acquaintance of inferior ability, inferior training and often inferior personal charm. The marriages which result from college association are not often premature — college men and college women marry later than other men and women — and it is certainly true that no better marriages can be made than those

founded on common interests and intellectual friendships.

A college man who has known college women, as a rule, is not drawn to those of lower ideals and inferior training. His choice is likely to be led toward the best he has known. A college woman is not led by mere propinquinty to accept the attentions of inferior men.

Where college men have chosen friends in all cases both men and women are thoroughly satisfied with the outcome of co-education. It is part of the legitimate function of higher education to prepare women, as well as men, for happy and successful lives.

An Eastern professor, lately visiting a Western state university, asked one of the seniors what he thought of the question of co-education.

"I beg your pardon," said the student, "what question do you mean?"

"Why, co-education," said the professor, "the education of women in colleges for men."

"Oh," said the student, "co-education is not a question here."

And he was right. Co-education is never a question where it has been fairly tried.

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